

TOC H JOURNAL



OCTOBER
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THREEPENCE

Toc H for New Friends

What it is

Toc H is out to win men's friendship and their service for the benefit of others. It stands always, but especially now, when values which seemed permanent are being discarded, for truth and understanding, for unselfishness and fair dealing, for individual freedom based on a practical Christian outlook on life. Toc H works under a Royal Charter granted by H.M. King George V in 1922.

How it started

It began with Talbot House (Toc H is the signaller's way of saying T.H.) opened in 1915 in the Belgian town of Poperinghe, the nearest habitable point in the Ypres Salient. Owing largely to the Rev. P. B. Clayton, an Army Chaplain in charge, it soon secured a reputation in the British Expeditionary Force as a place of friendship and cheerfulness. Many who used it found their way to the Chapel in the loft and gained fresh strength to realise that "behind the ebb and flow of things temporal stand the Eternal Realities."

1919 to 1939

"Tubby" Clayton and a few survivors saw the need to recapture in peace-time the spirit of comradeship in common service and sacrifice which they had learnt in war and to pass it on to a new generation. The idea spread. By 1939 Toc H was established in over 1,000 places in the United Kingdom and had forged a chain linking 500 more throughout the Empire and beyond. More than 20 hostels (called Marks) have been opened.

In War-time

Founded in one war, Toc H now serves in another. In the interval it has built up a distinctive 'family' life and a method of work. A great many of its members are on active service by land, sea and air, others in the Civil Defence services, others serving the common cause in every field. A special form of war-work is the 'Toc H Services Clubs,' of which over 350, at home and overseas, are now open. These are much more than canteens —homely places where men meet as friends and try to serve one another.

What it means in practice

In his efforts to further the objects for which Toc H exists, each member has what is called the Toc H Compass to guide him. Its Four Points may thus be summarised:

To Think Fairly. To win a chivalry of mind, whereby he will be humble-minded in his judgment of great issues, avoiding prejudice and striving for truth.

To Love Widely. To learn the habit of trying day by day to understand and to help all sorts and conditions of men.

To Witness Humbly. To spread the weekday Christian Gospel is the supreme object of Toc H. Every member is pledged to do his bit by carrying the contagion quietly.

To Build Bravely. (a) To be resolute in building his own life, without forgetting that what matters most is not what he can do for himself but what he can do for others. (b) To see in Toc H a bridge between himself and the lives of others, and to build it bravely.

Membership

Toc H wants men who are willing to put service before self, are trying to think fairly and are willing to offer friendship. You probably won't be asked to join, but if you feel you want to share in this great adventure, let us know. It will cost you no more than you can afford. If you would like to know more about it, ask any member you know or write to Toc H Headquarters, 47, Francis Street, London, S.W.1.

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AROUND THE MAP

What Men Think

TOC H spends more time telling the public what it is trying to do for men on active service than about the men's opinions of what is done. Here are three glimpses, both coming, as it were, from outside. First, a member writes that, after reading the news of Gibraltar given in the June JOURNAL, he wrote to an office friend of his, a non-member stationed there, suggesting that he should sample the Toc H Services Club at 186, Main Street. His friend replies:—

"Have I been to the Toc H Club? I nearly live there! Can spend a good evening there any time—table tennis, darts, piano, reading-room and café, and interesting talks once a week. Everybody 'mucks in,' and it is so popular that your evening for helping, say in the café serving tea, etc., only comes once a week. You would be in your element here!"

In the second case the mother of an airman writes to a member:—

"May I offer my sincere appreciation of your kind invitation to Eddie to visit the Altrincham Toc H when home on leave. I am afraid that it will be a long time before he will be able to accept your kind invitation, as he is posted to the Middle East. He has written to say that he gets 36 hours off duty each week and that he spends them at the Toc H Hostel in Alexandria, which he praises very highly. The last letter we received from him said that he was going to a debate between the Toc H at Alex. and the Toc H at Aboukir (he is stationed at Aboukir), and he said also that he was having seven days' leave and was spending it at Cairo and staying in the Toc H Hostel there. I thought this information would be of use to you, as it tends to show the great work that Toc H in Egypt is doing for our boys out there."

And here is a quotation from the letter of a Canadian mother, who had heard of her son from our Services Club at Greenock, Scotland, which had suffered in an air-raid. She writes to Toc H Headquarters in Toronto:—

"I would like to say that no words can express just the gratitude we feel at this evidence of thoughtfulness on the part of your executive in the Mother Country, particularly under the exist-

ing circumstances—the fortitude of the people in those devastated areas is really amazing. Kindly accept this tribute of appreciation for the work your Club is doing to make a home away from home for our beloved boys. . . ."

The delayed Cable

And here is another letter from the Greenock Services Club, quoted in *Toc H Chronicle*, the magazine of Toc H Canada, for July-August, under the heading "The Little Things." The Hon. Secretary of the Club writes to a sailor's mother in Toronto:—

"I write to explain why the enclosed cablegram was not sent to you in time for Mothers' Day. On that day, you perhaps felt somewhat disappointed that your sweetheart, Bill, did not remember you in a special way, but, mother-like, you would find some excuse for his seeming thoughtlessness. I bet you said he would be too busy, or he would be at sea, and certainly would not have a chance to do anything. Yet I know that Bill was remembering his dear mother a week before the 11th of May. On Monday, the 5th of May, Bill came into our Services Club and asked my wife if she would arrange for the Secretary to send a cablegram for Mothers' Day. Special arrangements had been made for us to do this. The enclosed (cable message) was uplifted, with 3/4d., by me that night for dispatch the following morning.

"In the early hours of the following morning my home was completely destroyed by enemy action. I remembered Bill's cablegram, but I did not have your address, nor could I remember his ship. The cablegram was in my jacket buried in a huge pile of debris. Only a few days ago the jacket was recovered. Now you know the reason why you did not have the cablegram from your loyal and dutiful son. I will certainly write to Bill with a similar explanation, and, besides, I owe him 3/4d. . . . I am glad to say my wife and children are safe and well. They were in a shelter and I, fortunately, on police duty. . . ."

Hard Work in Newfoundland

Some months ago we told readers that Ian Fraser, one-time Secretary of Toc H in Scotland, later Pilot of Eastern Canada, had gone to open up a Services Club in Newfoundland.

Some details of a venture which has not been easy now reach us in a report from Ian, written at the end of June.

He tells us that the premises at 2, Queen Street, St. John's, were in very poor condition when he took them over on February 6, and they could not be opened as a Club until March 9, when the two lower floors were ready; "these consist of a reading-room and library, a writing-room, a small canteen, a kitchen, a fairly large games room, and one small side room for officers." A wash-room, with hot water twenty-four hours a day, is attached. "The top storey," he writes, "is being converted into bunk-rooms for the men. Unfortunately, the roof fell in during the course of the operation, as did the floor, and considerable delay has occurred in getting these rooms ready."

"The work," says Ian, "can be roughly divided into three distinct phases—1. The general running of the premises for reading, writing and games; 2. The provision of sleeping accommodation, especially at week-ends, for men; 3. The making of contacts with ships in harbour and the looking after of survivors, when the need arises. The premises are open daily, holidays and Sundays, from 9 a.m. to 11 p.m." Add to this looking after 16 men who occupy the beds at night, providing their breakfast, cleaning the premises and visiting the ships in port (a vital job), and it is clear that Ian and the ex-Leading Seaman who helps him are hard put to it; a third man is needed. "The local membership consists of five people, all very willing but all very busy, and while they do relieve on a number of evenings, help in the provision of entertainment and deal with a number of personal problems themselves, it is unlikely that, in the probable event of increased operations, they would be able to carry on without more help.

For a time "the movement of Spring ice and the exigencies of the Battle of the Atlantic" nearly emptied the place for six weeks. At the end of this time "the western movement of the Battle of the Atlantic" brought storm and convoy-damaged ships and the Canadian Navy in increasing quantities. During the six weeks before Ian wrote about 150 survivors from torpedoed ships had been landed and the Club had done what it could to stand by the Government in helping them.

'Mark II, Iceland'

In a report dated August 31, Alec Churcher writes, under this heading, about our second venture:—

"I have been very busy on the new Club. A number of unexpected snags have arisen, and at one moment I was in despair, as it looked as though the whole thing would fall through. Now, however, real progress has been made. . . The G.O.C. has now taken a hand, with the result that two (huts) are being put at our disposal and will be altered and arranged to suit our requirements. . . Stevenson, the architect lad who designed our Chapel (see picture in September JOURNAL) is on the job and is making an excellent

start at turning bare Nissen huts into something quite attractive. . . For obvious reasons I may give no details of the location of this new Club. The site is extremely isolated and in winter may be quite isolated except by sea, which makes it doubly important that we should get our furniture, etc., there before the bad weather sets in. There is no village of any kind within miles. There will be large numbers of men of all three Services in the neighbourhood. . ."

He gives details of work on the Club in Reykjavik. The pressure of canteen work, especially



The Canteen in the Reykjavik House.

at week-ends, is tremendous, but the Club clearly contrives to make many personal contacts and to do a good deal of the real work of Toc H. "Probationers," says Alec, "come along in a steady trickle, though movement of troops means that we seem to be losing men almost as fast. But without doubt the Group is winning many new men to an interest in, and understanding of, Toc H, even if their membership cannot be 'consummated' here. . . The main event since my last report has been the Royal Air Force Guest Night (Navy and Army Guest Nights have already been reported), at which the Air-Commodore was Guest of Honour. The ground floor of the House was closed for the evening and about 80 invited Air Force men filled the canteen and the adjoining rooms. Refreshments were provided and the 'Tic Tocs' (Toc H Concert Party) put on a forty-minute entertainment. Light was taken by an Air Force man, after which the Air-Commodore spoke for a few minutes. The evening finished with a twenty-minute talk by me. One result was that we had two Air Force officers serving in the canteen of the House the following night. The *Britain after the War* series finished according to

plan, and, I think, was of value. . . next month we have the British Minister speaking on 'Peace Aims,' and in October a new series is being planned on the subject of America, with American speakers."

'Northern Light'

Discerning readers must have noticed a decline in the standard of the JOURNAL since its late Assistant Editor left it. Alec Churcher, however, has not abandoned journalism. Apprenticed, if we may dare to say so, in the untidy editorial office at Francis Street, he now produces *Northern Light* from Tungata 6, Reykjavik. No. 2 has just reached us. Encouraged by the quick sale of No. 1 (noticed in these pages in July), the September issue blossoms into an attractive yellow cover and



"V for Victory, Sir"

quite a crop of pictures; indeed, it looks like the old JOURNAL, only more so. *Northern Light* is full of good things, not least a long poem on Iceland by the editor himself (Alec's poems in our own JOURNAL have often made their mark) and some line drawings by Signalman J. R. Wilson, two of which we 'lift,' with acknowledgment but no apology.

Aftermath

We must expect that the fighting in Greece and Crete, already old history, will gradually

add to the list of our members who have fallen or are missing or prisoners of war. We have recently heard that F. P. TARLING and C. W. A. WOODFINE, both privates in the R.A.M.C., are prisoners. They were serving with the 26th General Hospital, in which Padre Kestell Cornish started a Toc H Group in Greece as far back as December, 1940 (see JOURNAL, March, 1941, p. 48). Tarling became a member in Greece; Woodfine is the holder of a Toc H Pass but apparently not yet elected to membership. And the *Stockport Express* of September 11 reported that JOSEPH MASSEY, Royal Marines, a member of Reddish Branch, was also a prisoner. All these wrote home from a German 'Transit Camp' in Crete some months ago; their final prison address is unknown, but many men taken in Greece have gone to Stalag XVIII B and XVIII D. An airgraph letter from the Middle East also brings news that FARTHING, the former Secretary of a Group in New Zealand, is "missing, believed prisoner in Crete."

JAMES HOWARTH (Heywood Group), reported missing on April 7, is now known to be a prisoner in Italy. Details of three members of Larbert Group, lacking in the list of prisoners in last month's JOURNAL, have now been supplied, *viz.* : Pte. S. GRAY, No. 263, Stalag IX C; Pte. J. S. JARVIE, No. 151, Stalag IX C; Pte. J. SMITH, No. 400, Stalag IX C (156).

Another Echo from Crete

And here is an interesting touch, taken from a recent letter of TUBBY's to a friend:—

"I knew Crete well about five years ago, and landed there, and called on Arthur Evans (*the great excavator of Crete*), and drank their wine on my way back to Ships. I well remember visiting the place, when Britain was not then too popular, and being stirred, and highly surprised, to find that there was being held in Crete a Festival in honour of the British; apparently there stands, or rather stood, near to the old school in a Cretan town, a monument erected by the Cretans, proud to record the help they had received from a small body of the Royal Navy, who had endured till death, on one occasion during the early Wars of liberation. This monument may now have been destroyed, either by bombing or since Crete was lost; but will be rebuilt, when Crete regains once more its ancient liberties and life."

"They used to keep an annual Festival in honour of these twenty British martyrs; and I was there upon the day itself. I do not think that the day will be forgotten, and many English names will in the future be added to that Roll of Sacrifice. Nothing is known, so far as I am aware, beyond the names of the British few who died for

pitality for the airmen here pretty thoroughly. In consequence of this talk, I believe, Que Que, Umrunga and Bulawayo Toc H are organising week-ends at these places for shooting, hunting and fishing, etc., and we also have two sites in view for converting into camping-sites for week-ends or leave."



Toc H Services Club at South Shields.

Crete against its usurpation; I think the year was 1878, when Crete was suffering sorely under Turkey. We must imagine that the little Group of British who then died were unimportant, men whom no Church would have considered Saints; and yet I found them canonised by Crete—part of its old historic Roll of Martyrs; and with a Saints' Day of their own still kept in little Cretan Churches, and in Townships; and in the village streets, where flowers were strewn as the procession passed in their high honour."

A Note from Rhodesia

L.A.C. 'Tug' Wilson writes from Gwelo, Southern Rhodesia :—

"Toc H here is doing really marvellous work, and is running a very efficient canteen with hot meals, 'all unrationed.' There is, of course, the usual lounge and reading-room, etc. The snag is the House does not pay for itself, and we have to rely on voluntary contributions to a large extent. We have a scheme at the camp of airmen paying 1/- a month, voluntarily of course, and we get in a few pounds by that. . . I had quite a long talk with the Rhodesian Area Registrar, Mr. Molyneux, and Mr. J. Swan, the Area Secretary, and we went into the matter of providing hos-

In Response to the Broadcast

The Chairman's broadcast appeal on August 3 (see page 151) is bringing in not only thousands of contributions, mostly in small sums, but a host of letters, many grateful, a few critical or comic. None of these is more moving than a letter from a Yorkshirewoman, enclosing 3s. Here it is just as she wrote it :—

" Friend a little is better than non at all I my self as 4 sones in this war doing their little bet and on March 21 my younest Son was kill at Plymof and hadle been on leaf fore 9 days and just been back two and harf days when he was kill and when he went back to is Barks (barracks) he took his young wife and child back with him and all 3 was kill, so this leaves us to have 3 sones doing their bet and God bless them all from the bottom of my Ant (heart) Mrs. —.

" Pleased excuse this letter as Im not a good scholler as I never went to school I hade to work and do what I could fore my Mother as my Mother was left with 3 little children to bring up and I was only ten then now we are all Married Good Luck to all them that is doing there bet fore us once more God Bless them all."

TOC H AND THE SAILOR

Everyone in Toc H knows TUBBY's concern with Toc H among seamen, both of the Royal Navy and of tankers of the Merchant Navy. Some of us have heard him voice his regret that, with some notable exceptions, so few Naval officers have hitherto become members. With this point he begins the letter—a reply to a Naval officer member—which we have permission to print here.

ASKED you what you thought we ought to do in order to inspan more of the Wardroom, and your reply is what I should expect. Permit me please to quote a paragraph:—

"I agree personally very much with the point you emphasised in the article you wrote in the JOURNAL at the beginning of the war that Toc H is no use unless its work is rooted in the things of the Spirit, and it is not just another form of Social Service. The Service of Christ, as Toc H emphasises, calls for the whole man's surrender. The Church aims at the central citadel first to get a man to see and acknowledge the Lordship of Christ and then range his whole personality behind that. Toc H's share in the Church's work is to give that man who is a Christian, scope for the outworking of his faith. But Toc H also with many men works from a man's circumference by interesting him in fellowship and service, and so leading him on to a personal relationship with the Lord who is the mainspring of true Toc H living. Where a man gets no further than this circumference of fellowship and service Toc H has largely failed."

Upon this one true basis you proceed to make it clear that officers, who feel that Toc H represents a useful channel whereby they can assist in Christian work, should have the opportunity of joining quietly put before them now and then. If, on the other hand, they think it best to keep a friendly contact with Toc H, without themselves belonging to the Movement, we must not urge them to the further step; for God will tell them what they ought to do. I am, as you are thoroughly aware, convinced by very wide experience that no one can do more to help Toc H. Here I am thinking of the regulars, who are to-day outnumbered in the Wardrooms; regular Navy officers who join are not so rare as some good people think. Admiral Fisher, with his keen perception, would not have made the Movement his concern, and recommended it to Navy officers, had he not felt that they could take their part. In future years, when peace again returns, the Wardrooms and the Gun-rooms will no longer retain their wide enrichment of to-day, and there is bound to be a marked reaction. If, at this stage, Toc H

can have convinced those who have watched its work in various centres, that here is something which promotes religion in ways appropriate to the sea profession, I think we may be hopeful of results.

Meanwhile, I thoroughly agree with you that copies of the JOURNAL should be sent to Wardrooms, Gun-rooms, and to those who wish to be informed more fully of Toc H. This would, of course, entail no light expense; but we must sow where we desire to reap; and I have in my heart no higher hope than that the Royal Navy and the Merchant Navy men, in the future, undertake the task of helping the shore units of Toc H in every port where Toc H has a team. Supposing that this help is solely rendered by faithful members from the Lower Deck, you and I know that they will do their best, but that their task may be misunderstood.

This is a moment when a world of difference can be created by the understanding, and the interpretation, of Toc H being sustained at the blunt end of ships. It is essential to good discipline that officers should share their men's ideals, and cordially approve of those shore interests which Toc H is attempting to promote.

Toc H spread by Sailors

In the first days, when all Toc H was young, Pat Leonard and Hugh Sawbridge, Harry Ellison, Gilbert Williams, Owen and Bobs and Herbert and the rest, worked overseas for varying periods, teaching Toc H, and handling its inception. In anxious years ahead, after the war, Toc H will be reduced in its finance to something like a third of pre-war income. It would be madness for us to expect to be enabled to despatch new teachers, either at the expense of those to whom they are accredited, or at our own. As I foresee the future, the gravest situation will arise throughout the Empire when the war is won;

and for at least ten years we cannot hope that Toc H will have money for such objects. How then can we be possibly enabled to keep the Movement on its true foundation? By what true act of foresight and wise care can we take steps at present to secure that Toc H is not shallowed and distorted, untaught, misled; and painfully deprived of all the inspiration which your coming, together with your team, in the old *Dauntless*, brought to Toc H in South America? I know you will not wish me to put down what you accomplished at an anxious time; nor need I mention other instances where Chaplains, like John Armstrong, with their men, have stabilised and strengthened little units which still survive to call *Courageous* blest.

The Dominion Executive in New Zealand will not forget its members in *Achilles*. Somewhere in Naples, if the German hordes have not sent him to a sorrier place, there is an Italian Vice-Consul who joined Toc H, thanks to a British sailor. The Hospital at Trincomalee wheels its cases on stretchers made by Naval Toc H men. Lepers at Seletar, who owe so much to Toc H R.A.F., smoke pipes provided by a collection made by British Tankers.

Has not the time now dawned when those ashore should finally disown as absurd, that most self-righteous nonsense which regards sailors as bringing trouble to a port; and therefore wisely, by prudential persons, to be provided with an Institute, with entertainments and with comic songs? Sailors are men who have a large proportion of Godliness and humour and discernment. They come ashore, by no means unprepared to take a part in any good things going, to lend a hand with Scouts or Camps or Clubs, with Hos-

pitals (especially for children). The sailors (like our Editor foretold in Dickens) is the most willing person in the world; no doubt he has—and who can blame him?—some pent-up passions, and some low desires. Ports wish to have his money, not his friendship; and he turns sadly to the Institutes—built by the pious and the public-minded, in order to make sure he finds his place, which ought to be in their domestic circle, for every sailor is a son from sea.

Cannot Toc H attempt then to insert into the public mind a new conception? The sailor, both the Officer and Rating, comes to the land with problems of his own, but he is readily prepared to help Civic and Christian needs which he encounters. He seldom begs; the beggars swarm round him, because they know sailors can be deceived, and have not got a callous round their hearts. Still more than this, sailors can speak sometimes, and speak—though shyly—with experience, of sunsets and dawns which they have seen, and of the God Whom they have tried to serve. I sometimes think a Mission to the world could have results, if nobody but sailors conducted the campaign on Christ's behalf. With all the horrors man has introduced, the sea remains a portion of the world which God has made; and in its vast expanse man has but marred the fringes of the sea. Night watches make profound philosophers. The brain is steady, where the hand is sure; and lives accustomed to the storm and calm, are seldom peevish, rarely little-minded. Like boys from school (and what a school it is!) the sailor revels in his liberty—this liberty, however, can be used, and often is, in ways which help the landsman. Cannot Toc H, then, crystallise that help?

TUBBY.

The World Chain of Light

The World Chain of Light will be observed again this year on December 11, the anniversary of the opening of Talbot House, Poperinghe, in 1915. Units and members in the Western Hemisphere wishing to take part should hold the Ceremony of Light at 9 p.m., by their local time, on that night; those in the Eastern Hemisphere on December 12. The first link and the last will be forged in Talbot House, Reykjavik, Iceland. A message from Iceland and a Litany members may like to use are being circulated to all units immediately.

OUR BROADCAST APPEAL

We hope that a great many Toc H members, among many thousands of the general public, listened to the voice of HARRY WILLINK, Chairman of Toc H, broadcasting in the 'Week's Good Cause,' for the Toc H War Services Fund on August 3. We print his talk by kind permission of the B.B.C. In response to the appeal over £10,000 has been received up to date. In addition nearly £2,000 was raised in connection with the appeal before the broadcast was made. The need continues and it is never too late to help.

JUST a year ago this Sunday those who listened at this time heard a soldier (*Brigadier Sir Colin Jardine*) tell the story of Toc H with the B.E.F. As a result we have been enabled to do our job in ways and in places otherwise quite beyond our resources. To-night I come to report progress and to ask your further help.

I knew Toc H in Flanders twenty-five years ago. I have been right in Toc H ever since, and I am proud to-day to be the Chairman of its Central Executive.

Never in our history have our men and women, our boys and girls, been dispersed so widely from their homes, and all that those homes mean. They are overcoming many difficulties but probably no trial is harder to bear than that of loneliness. To remove such loneliness Toc H provides Houses which have about them all the warmth and hospitality of a home. This work is an expression of the Christian duty of friendly service which has always been the keynote of Toc H.

Think of our men of the three Services now in the sweltering heat of North Africa. Last December we sent Staff men to Alexandria, and a House was opened with 80 beds. It was soon clear that there was the same need at Cairo. With generous help from the British War Relief Society of America, premises with 60 beds were found. Now the third venture is established, an "Under-Twenty" Club in Alexandria for boys of the Fleet under twenty years of age. This Club alone will cost £1,000 a year to run. Have you a boy under twenty years of age in the Fleet? If you have, it must be a comfort to you to know that when he arrives in Alexandria there will be a home and a friend to welcome him.

Far north in Iceland our Toc H House in Reykjavik has been open since last October. There are three experienced Staff men, and in addition to all the usual amenities of a House they have provided a Musical Society, a Sketching Club and Groups for discussion of post-war problems.

In the heart of Abyssinia, at Addis Ababa itself, the local Fascist Club was converted into a Toc H Club the day after the entry of the South African troops.

We have had our losses which have to be made good. At Gibraltar, at Hull, at Portsmouth and at Coventry, bombing has destroyed our premises. Coventry was our first attempt to meet the needs of munition workers. We cannot forecast the directions in which we shall have to expand. This is certain: we shall follow the men wherever we are allowed to follow them.

On June 30 there were 278 Toc H Clubs in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. In addition to these there are Clubs at training centres in the Dominions and elsewhere overseas which bring the total to 400. To meet the calls that are being made upon us we need a War Fund of £50,000 a year.

The response that you made last year encouraged us to believe that you valued our work. I am here to ask you to make it clear that we can count upon your continued goodwill. All your gifts will go to the Toc H War Services Fund and will be used to provide homely surroundings for the men and women of the Services.

Thank you for listening. Please send your gift to me—Henry Willink, 47, Francis Street, London, S.W.1. Scottish contributions should be sent to Lord Home at 149, West George Street, Glasgow. Good-night.

TOC H AUSTRALIA IN WAR-TIME

We welcome the following comprehensive 'despatch' from GORDON TURVEY (Secretary, Australian Executive) all the more because it is the first to reach the JOURNAL from Australia in war-time. It was written at the end of May and reached England in August. Since then Gordon has been sent by Toc H Australia to work in our Services Clubs in Egypt.

SO far, Australia has hardly been touched by the destruction of war. The war has been afar off, and we have looked at it objectively, like a fascinated spectator. Of recent months it has come nearer to us by a lengthening list of casualties and the occasional arrival of a transport of wounded. And there have been mines in Australian waters and talk of raiders. But no air-raid or invasion has spread devastation to our cities, no rumble of guns has disturbed the silence of the bush.

For news of the war itself and its significance in other countries we listen to the B.B.C. short-wave broadcasts, which are relayed and re-broadcast throughout the Commonwealth. But first-hand news from those who have returned from the war zones is difficult to come by, and only a few of us read British publications and pronouncements to learn how your thoughts and plans for the future have been revolutionised by your experiences. We don't really know what war means to you, and without this first-hand experience we have had to rely largely upon our imagination to create a conception of 'total war' and all that is involved in this fight for freedom, truth and justice. Now that Mr. Menzies has returned we hope to learn more.

The 'war effort' of Australia is, therefore, all the more remarkable. Our contribution of men, money and munitions may not be a large proportion of that of Britain and her allies, but it does represent a tremendous effort on the part of the people of Australia, and one which is supported by a growing determination as the significance of the war comes home to us. To produce munitions wasn't simply a matter of enlarging our factories and working three shifts. In many cases we had to build the factories first; we had to design and construct the plant to put into them; we had to make the machines to make the plant; we had to train the operatives. Not an unimpre-

sive feat for a primary producing country which continues to grow wheat, raise stock and get minerals.

The Australian earns a good wage, has plenty of opportunities for sport and likes the open-air life in a sunny climate. Can you wonder, then, that he has little interest in social problems or takes little part in politics? (Only about 50 per cent. polled in the recent State elections here). So the Australian is quite unprepared for thoughtful consideration of the sociological and religious problems which the war has presented. He is not concerned about the changes of outlook as well as of mode of living which are happening elsewhere and surely will eventually have their repercussions here.

A 'Social Conscience' at Work

But if Toc H does nothing else, it does give its members a social conscience. While Toc H men may not be in a position to grapple with the large conundrums of war and the subsequent peace, yet they have at once responded with an interest in these matters. At first, when war was declared, we didn't quite know what to do or what to expect would happen to the Toc H as we knew it. Would it be able to continue? Would it have a place and a job to do after the war? But once a lead was given, the response was immediate, and units started on war work jobs with such gusto and serious determination that sometimes it seemed likely that meetings would be abandoned altogether. Now we have seen that one of our jobs is to maintain—nay, more than that—to build up Toc H here in preparation to the work of peace.

Our actual work seems a pale shadow beside the undertakings of Toc H in England under unimaginable conditions. Naturally, with us, as members joined up, some Groups went out of existence, while others hung on with perhaps two of their 15 members left, and the

probationers in charge. On an average something like 20 per cent. of the membership has enlisted. Militia training, compulsory between the ages of 19 and 33 except for those in reserved occupations, of which the farmer is one, takes men to camp for 90 days at a stretch twice a year, and units live in spasms. Area organisation has been reduced for more economical working with the man-power available. Three States are without full-time staff (Bobby Howes and Brian Billings both enlisted in the Australian Imperial Forces), but are doing good work with voluntary leaders.

Now we are finding Toc H is beginning to grow again. Other men are looking round for ways to serve the country. They can't all be A.R.P. Wardens or enlist in the A.I.F. or the Defence Force. But they know the work Toc H is doing and they come in to help, and often stay to teach others of a new-found life.

Of the men who have enlisted it is wrong to say that we have lost members; we have merely sent out missionaries. There are not many who have actually formed Service units, but they are spreading Toc H. Copies of the Australia magazine, *The Link*, and a news-sheet, sent monthly to each from Australian H.Q., are passed round to many friends. Three military units have formed Toc H circles while in camp here and have taken Rushlights with them when they went overseas, the 2nd/3rd Field Ambulance, the 2nd Australian General Hospital, and the 2nd/27th Battalion of the A.I.F.

In spite of much additional individual work such as A.R.P., First Aid, etc., and war service committees, very few peace-time jobs have been allowed to lapse. Units have found that many new forms of service can be undertaken even with fewer members. The majority of such work is in support of existing war service organisations such as the Australian Comforts Fund, the Red Cross, First Aid Classes run in collaboration with St. John Ambulance Brigade, and waste collection as an auxiliary to the work of Scouts and Guides. Some units have started War Savings Certificate Groups in country towns, often adding the attraction of community singing and concerts which

have an attendance of up to 200. In Victoria three Branches are running woodworking groups to make articles for the Red Cross Society. 20 or 30 carpenters, professional and amateur, work every night in a borrowed carpenter's shop, where they are allowed the use of power-driven machinery. The output is very large and the quality of workmanship excellent. The Toc H units concerned have made a name for themselves in their town and have made numerous new friends from the citizens they have enlisted to the work.

Toc H Services Clubs

In some places where Toc H exists near a camp, canteens and clubs are run for the men when on leave, but the largest work of this sort is the Hostels, inaugurated and run by Toc H in *Sydney, Melbourne, Perth and Brisbane*. Early in 1940, New South Wales opened its Service Club, taking over new premises and Area H.Q. at Loftus Street, Sydney, near the Circular Quay, for the purpose. The ladies run a canteen and there are also the usual amenities of reading room and library, games room, writing room and chapel. It is open daily from 9 a.m. till 11 p.m., and caters for over 1,000 men a month. There is no hostel, but this is compensated for by a well-run system of billeting which takes care of 150 men per week in private homes and guest houses at no cost to the men.

No new premises were acquired in *Melbourne*, but with the help of a sympathetic landlord and the assistance of a grant from the Government, their office premises were enlarged and equipped as a hostel for weekends only, from Friday night until Monday morning. It is very centrally placed in Collins Street and although near quite a number of other service clubs and hostels, is filling a much-felt want for extra week-end accommodation, and, indeed, is noted for its homely atmosphere and the friendly welcome which all receive. Its 80 beds are often booked out by Thursdays, which shows its popularity. Nominal charges are made. It is staffed by Toc H men and their lady friends take charge of the kitchen. The Area Padre runs a special hostel service on Sundays in the chapel.

Lockley Hall has been specially rented and converted for a service club and hostel in Perth, W.A., with 60 beds, and is passing 1,300 men a month through its doors. Wyatt Joyce, the Area Secretary, is its Warden, and is helped by Toc H men and some 200 women under the leadership of the L.W.H. It was opened officially on November 9, 1940.

On October 9, the Governor of Queensland (and the State President of Toc H) opened a Service Club in *Brisbane*. Again, it is run by Toc H and L.W.H. In Tasmania, Toc H men are helping with a service club in *Hobart* run by the Australian Comforts Fund. In *Adelaide*, the Cheer-Up Society which did a big work in the last war, was given temporary shelter in the Toc H Clubrooms until they obtained their original premises.

So each State capital finds Toc H on the map and doing something for men on leave, and in most cases it is a tremendous job which is being done. Interesting contacts have been made with internees, mainly by correspondence. One man, at one time the Pilot of an English unit, is keeping in touch with Toc H here and is making headway with the establishment of a circle of interested friends in his camp. The housing of thousands of munition workers around new munition works is being taken care of by the Federal Government, but recreational facilities in some cases will be quite inadequate for the new communities. Toc H is doing its best by propaganda and work to see that community centres are also established. This will be a new venture as community centres are hardly known at all in Australia and careful planning is necessary.

Help for the Middle East

As you know, Toc H in Australia has accepted very gladly the opportunity to contribute towards the expenses of the Talbot Houses opened in Alexandria and Cairo and to be responsible for the salary and upkeep of at least one staff man. This task of raising money is being undertaken by the whole membership throughout the Commonwealth, and, of course, is additional to the money being raised in many Areas for the Hostels which they themselves are running and paying for. In spite of this and a depleted membership, we do not think we shall find it insuperable to meet our own Australian commitments for maintaining our own staff men, towards which each area contributes a quota. In this respect the response of the members and units is most gratifying, for quite a number are, of course, busy raising money for other war charities as well.

Our Australia-wide appeal for the Near East Hostels is for £2,000, and the beginnings are promising. Lord Gowrie, the Australian President of Toc H, knows the need for such hostels, and is enthusiastic over the scheme. In sending his donation, he wrote, "Having seen for myself the splendid work of Toc H in the last war, I feel sure that the appeal which you propose to launch will meet with a ready response."

From Australia we send you the warmest greetings. Our sympathy and prayers go out to you during these times. With you, if God will, we look forward to sharing the privileged task of taking our part in the rebuilding of a peaceful world.

THE ELDER

CULBERT.—Killed in the crash of a ferry-plane in August, JOSEPH ('TOMMY') CULBERT, a member of Montreal West End Group, Canada. Elected 1933.

DOBSON.—Killed in action on July 7, ALBERT DOBSON, Sergt.-Pilot, R.A.F.V.R., a member of Derby Branch.

DODGE.—On July 22, on active service in the Middle East, Rev. E. J. DODGE, C.F., an

BRETHREN

Association Padre, South Western Area.
Elected 1.3.'23.

FINCH.—On August 6, at Dar-es-Salaam (where he had been since 1938), REGINALD G. FINCH, formerly a member of Hornchurch Branch. Elected 4.6.'34.

YEO.—In August, WILLIAM GEORGE YEO, Navigator-in-Training, R.A.F., a member of Wallasey Branch.

FRIENDSHIP MISSION

I SUPPOSE when one has lived most of one's life in foreign countries in some sort of representation of British trade, one becomes interested, and perhaps anxious, in connection with what are generally termed 'Foreign Relations.' Anyway, this must be my excuse for what follows. In more quarters than one I have recently voiced the suggestion of the 'Friendship Mission' as an essential addition to the ways and means hitherto employed in the exercise of foreign relationship.

In the ordinary course of individual life a man makes two classes of friends, the business friend, and the bosom friend. To some extent either may partake of the nature of the other. The business friend puts business your way and expects something to be passed to him in return; the bosom friend will gladly incur sacrifice for your happiness or health, and wants no return.

In the international and inter-Dominion fields business friendship has long been practised, and we have had our Trade Missions, Commercial Treaties, and the like to promote it. Yet the world would be a sad place indeed if the sole individual relationship were based upon buying and selling in some form or other, and I contend that international human relationship could be vastly improved by establishing means of exercising between nations a friendship as pure, unselfish, and tolerant as can exist between man and man.

It may be said that some self-sacrifice has been practised by countries which have, for instance, gone to the relief of another which has been stricken by earthquake, famine, or disease, but here the act has been that of a good Samaritan rather than of a personal friend.

If a man has a friend he is concerned principally with that friend's health and happiness; he likes to see him in good health, and in cheerful mood; he likes to stride strongly by his side; to laugh with him, and to discuss the fortunes of friends and the world in general, and the two know that their talk and laughter are sweetened with that honesty which is the essential element in the relationship. Differences of opinion are talked over and respected; variations in temper or tem-

perament are appreciated and tolerated. Then, when crisis comes, one helps the other; and the one makes light of his help while the other, in his heart, exaggerates it and never forgets it. Can international friendship ever be raised to this level? God knows! Can the attempt be made? Yes.

Nations, as well as individuals, have their health and happiness. The first is a matter of hygiene and psychology; the second is concerned with the crafts, the arts and sport. There, I humbly suggest, lie the foundations for your tentative "Friendship Mission" which must, in the nature of the thing, be an exchange. Britain would offer such a mission, say, to that mythical old country, Ruritania. It would consist in personnel of a physician, surgeon, psychologist, dentist, naturalist, agriculturalist, stock-raiser, miner, carpenter, metal-worker, architect, artist, photographer, sculptor, composer, poet, musician, writer, humorist, and an all-round sportsman—twenty men. Thus would Britain set forth on a visit to its friend, while preparing to receive Ruritania as a guest. Men of science, art, sport, etc., would be getting ready. Naturally, one does not put up a friend at an hotel but at one's own home. Thus, many doors would be open to Ruritania—true, by Government arrangement, but this should only heighten the quality of hospitality.

Then a year would elapse, or possibly less, before the Ruritanian psychologist, carpenter, or humorist would have made all his contacts, walked, discussed and laughed with them, advised them, consulted them, and at the end of the year the British mission would return home again. Possibly the poets would ask the poet how he fared. He would say, "I have a wonderful lot of things to tell you, and to give you from Ruritania," and he would be asked, "Were you able to do anything for them?" "God knows," he would reply, "but they did say 'come again soon.'"

If I am asked what we may expect to get out of this I could only put another question in reply: "What do you expect to get from your friends?" Every Toc H member should be able to answer that question for himself.

W. J. L. L.

FROM THE LEPER FRONT

WORK for the leper stands first in the Gospel as having the express sanction in word and example from the Master Himself. Nothing can shake that truth. The covenanted blessing of our Lord is upon every worker in this cause, which is His own especially and supremely. Thus Tubby wrote when the news reached home of Frank Bye's death by enemy action at sea on April 18; he was coming home on leave, well-earned. Frank Bye joined up in the Toc H—B.E.L.R.A. ranks in 1937. He soon proved himself a keen and capable worker, whose cheerfulness and zeal made him popular with both patients and doctors. A young and promising life and a career of useful service to his fellow-men has now been cut short, but Frank Bye gave them for a noble cause and for what his country believes in and is fighting for, just as much as if he had fallen in the ranks of the fighting forces.

Work under Difficulties

A letter from Len Parker, written from Oji River Settlement in April, illustrates the difficulties that may be added to work already difficult. Writing to the General Secretary of B.E.L.R.A., he says :

" In one of my letters to you I told you about the trouble at Orifite, and finished by saying that the trouble was settled and everything was going to proceed satisfactorily. The week after your letter was posted the palaver blazed up again. The educated lads who work in Government offices at Aba and Enugu decided it was a 'shameful thing' to have a clinic near their village and they said 'anyway, there are no patients in our village.' To try to convince us they forbade the Orifite patients to come to the clinic for treatment. The bright lads next sent a petition to the Resident asking him to close the clinic. He declined, but offered to have another public meeting so that they could arrange to come and air their views. All their objections were shown to be unreasonable, but in spite of every effort made by the Resident the clinic had to be closed. . .

" Actually the Orifite palaver was a very good piece of propaganda. As soon as the clinic was closed there were representatives from four villages begging us to take the clinic to their area. After making sure that there was not going to be a repetition of the former difficulties, we eventually accepted sites from two of the villages. One is at Amichi, which is visited every Friday morning, and the other at Uke, on Friday afternoons. Both are in Onitsha Division, Amichi ten miles east of Orifite and Uke fifteen miles North. There

was a convenient road between them when the sites were chosen. The week before treatment was due to start at the two new clinics there was a flood. The river we had to cross changed its course, leaving the bridge high and dry—the old river course having been completely filled up with sand. The new course is through the embankment leading to the old bridge. The new course is very much wider, so a longer bridge will be needed. The P.W.D. cannot afford a new bridge yet so we have to make a wide detour by the bridge further downstream. Instead of travelling 15 miles by the direct route, we now have to do more than 30. This rather upset our calculations, for instead of getting a short rest at midday we are now travelling as fast as we can to get to Uke in something like reasonable time to start the afternoon's work. In spite of our frantic rush we rarely finish treatment much before sunset. There are already over 600 patients at each place and the number of applications for treatment is steadily increasing week by week. The time is soon coming when we shall have to restrict the number of new patients unless we receive an increase in staff. . .

" Now we are in a different place every day, except Saturday and Sunday. . . On Tuesdays we are at the extremity of the Eastern circuit, 60 miles from Oji; on Friday mornings we are at the Western extremity, 58 miles away."

He goes on to describe the delays in getting a clinic going at Nsukka : " As soon as a site was granted someone would come along claiming the land as his own and another land palaver would be started. There were three sites offered before everyone was agreed about the present site and we were allowed to start building. By the time the land palaver was settled we were anxious to get treatment started as quickly as possible. It was decided the patients in the district should put up the treatment shed, and local contractors build the caretaker's house and clinic-nurses' rest house. They were told to finish their respective works in four weeks. The contractor made a flying start and had a skeleton roof up at the end of the first week. Some of the timbers were not good so he was told to replace them. The patients had only gathered a few sticks. The second week the contractor had removed the bad wood but had not put anything in its place. The patients had put up the skeleton of their roof. It was unbelievable they could make so many mistakes! One of the wall-plate timbers was the thickest piece of wood I have ever seen in a horizontal position in a roof, and next to it was the thinnest. The other timbers were bent in all directions. The patients were told a thing or two about building and that their time was running short. The third week the contractor had done nothing further. The patients had a very respectable skeleton roof, but it still had to be thatched, the floor levelled, and a number of lesser jobs to be done before treatment could start. The fourth week I went along not expecting to find the work completed. I was pleasantly surprised to find the work completed and the tables and stools brought from the carpenter. Treatment started immediately. . ."

Movements of Leprosy Workers

KENNETH GODDARD, who has been in charge of a settlement at Berega, Tanganyika Territory, under the Church Missionary Society, was reported to have joined the armed forces of the Crown there, but a cable from him, recently received, states that he is still doing leprosy relief work, though now for the Government of Tanganyika.

HENRY COFFIN has proceeded on leave from

Itu, Nigeria, to South Africa and has arrived safely in Cape Town.

WILLIAM WALTER, who left to return to Nigeria in the middle of May, has got there safely and rejoined at Uzuakoli Settlement.

FRED TUCK, whom we have to congratulate on his marriage in August to Miss Edna Milton, a member of the Methodist Mission in Nigeria, has started for South Africa on long overdue and much needed leave.

NEWS FROM H.M.T. G.11 GROUP

A TALE of a Toc H 'temporary unit' in a troopship was given in the August JOURNAL; two more instances were noted in the September issue. Now we can add a fourth, with a circumstantial account of its doings. These four 'units' (there may well be others not reported) functioned, of course, quite unbeknownst to each other; they were the natural outcome in each case of one man's idea of what Toc H membership means and how an opportunity should be used.

Eric Schmidt was 20 when the war broke out. He had been District Secretary of West Wilts District and was a member of the Western Area Executive and of the Central Council. He joined the Royal Engineers, was soon seen with three stripes and was then given a commission.

Here is the letter he wrote to Sawbones on June 18:

c/o Army Post Office 890.

"Greetings from the Middle East—or almost so! We are nearing the end of our long journey, and I have some rather special news for you.

"About a fortnight out of England the thought came to me that there must surely be some Toc H men on board, so I obtained permission from O.C. Troops to call a meeting of any members or interested non-members. He readily agreed, and offered me the use of his day-cabin.

"At that first meeting twenty-three fellows turned up, including Leslie Doel, late Secretary of Trowbridge Branch, and it was unanimously agreed to form a temporary unit of Toc H while at sea.

"At the second meeting twenty-eight were present, including a Lt.-Colonel, a Major and three blokes of my own rank (2nd-Lieut.). I told them the story of Toc H from 1915 to the present day, and luckily was able to show them my photographs of the Old House, as I have them with me. At the meeting Leslie Doel was elected Secretary and Capt. Harlow (the ship's Padre) as

our Padre: he is a Toc H member and Vicar of Middlewich in normal times. About two dozen JOURNALS also appeared from the blue and we elected John Roberts, a member of Huddersfield Branch, as Librarian to take care of these precious 'books.'

"Our third meeting had an even better attendance—thirty-four—and the speaker was Capt. Harlow. He gave us a grand talk on Toc H Australia (he is a foundation member of a Branch there), and also on the Four Points.

"Our fourth and last meeting was held last Monday, when Tommy Hanson, 2nd-Lieut. R.E., gave an account of his ten years' experience of Toc H. He is a member of Skegness and Eastbourne Branches, and he had an audience of fifty-two!

"The whole idea of our meetings was twofold—first, to encourage existing Toc H men to make contact with their nearest units over here whenever possible, and, secondly, to interest as many non-members in Toc H as possible, so that they, too, will link up, wherever and whenever possible, with Toc H. I hope we have succeeded, but if only one or two of the non-members make contact, our efforts will have been well worth while.

"Our Temporary Unit has been a very unique one, despite the brevity of its life, and it has given Harlow, Hanson, Leslie Doel and myself great joy to be able to do our small bit towards running it. It helped us to forget many things, even the heat, which as I write is over 100 degrees in the shade. How we long for a frost again!

"I am enclosing a complete list of all our contacts, and also a copy of the 'Toc H Pass' I signed for each one of them. I thought it would be a good idea if you were to put a list of the actual members in the JOURNAL, so that their friends might see that they are still keeping their lights shining."

Eric Schmidt encloses the nominal roll of 'H.M.T. G.11. Temporary Unit,' with the names, ranks and home addresses of 67 officers and men. Acting on his suggestion, we give the names and units of the Toc H members among them, as follows:—

G. BAMBER (A.C.2, R.A.F., Aintree Branch),
R. D. BEWLEY (L.A.C., R.A.F., Calne Branch),
A. BRETT (A.C.1, R.A.F., Sandown-Shanklin Branch), D. W. CAREY (A.C.2, R.A.F., Southwell

Group), L. M. DOEL (Sapper, R.E., Trowbridge Branch), H. GREATREX (L/Cpl., Penzance Branch), T. H. HANSON (2nd-Lieut. R.E., Skegness Branch), A. W. HARLOW (Chaplain to the Forces, Toc H Australia), C. W. HAYWARD (Plymouth Branch), A. W. MIDDLETON (Wakefield Branch), J. PHILLIPS (A.C.1, R.A.F., Stourbridge), E. H. R. SCHMIDT (2nd-Lieut., R.E., Melksham Branch), R. H. SIMPSON (Sapper, R.E., Far Cotton Group).

He also sends a copy of the typed slip, headed *In lieu of a Toc H Pass*, which he issued to men interested. It runs:—

X, a Member/Non-Member of Toc H, was a member of a Temporary Unit of Toc H, formed at sea on H.M.T. G.11, and should be welcomed as a Member/Probationer wherever he may be.

E. SCHMIDT,

Member of the Central Council of Toc H.

Date.....

Signature of Member/Probationer.....

The Toc H Pass

The names of all men on the nominal roll of this 'temporary unit' are now being added at Headquarters to the steadily growing number of Service men who have received a *Toc H Pass* (see JOURNAL, December, 1939, p. 354). The Pass (with its attached postcard which is returned to Headquarters and filed in a card-index) is not, of course, a member-

ship card but the proof that the holder has been in touch with Toc H, is interested and is commended to our friendship anywhere in the world. Out of this index of pass-holders should come a most valuable reinforcement to our ranks for the tremendous tasks which lie ahead of us. It is comparable, in a real sense though with a difference, with the communicants' roll, kept on slips of paper signed in Talbot House, Poperinghe, which entitled the signatories to call themselves 'Foundation Members' of Toc H, when it came to be organised as a regular movement after the last war. Among the great body of pass-holders, now on active service, we ought to expect to find a new 'foundation' of men, on whom can be built the Toc H of the future, equipped with a burning experience, a fresh outlook, many ideas about new methods, and the old faith undiminished. Not all of them, of course, will be of this quality—any more than all the original Foundation members had a contribution to make to peace-time Toc H. But there will be some, there may be many, among them to lead us into the changed world which is coming.

B. B.

A 'CONTINENTAL CONFERENCE'

NO part of Toc H in this war has so far suffered "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" so directly as our units on the Continent of Europe—in Belgium, France and Holland. Up to the time when the storm broke on the Western front in the Spring of 1940 they had their particular niche and function in Toc H, their own difficulties, opportunities and limitations; they had a fine spirit of fellowship and a good record of work attempted and done. All that came to a violent end with the invasion of the enemy. All members lost their work and their homes, several their lives and others their liberty—for they are interned in German camps. Some were fortunate enough to reach England, with their families and the little they could save.

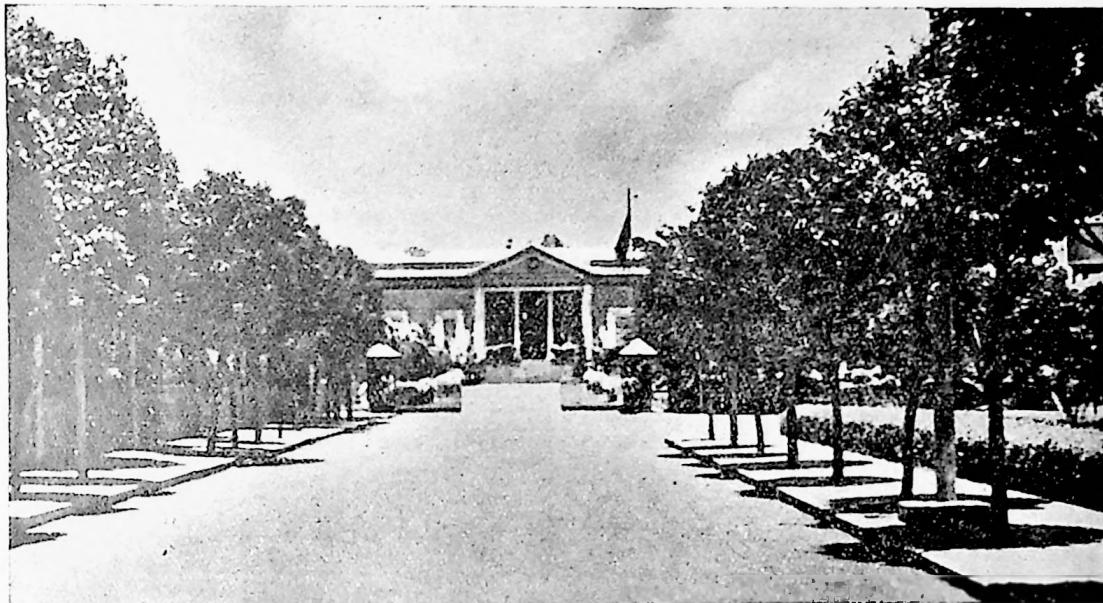
But they have not forgotten their old units, now disrupted, nor their place in the family of Toc H. A few of them were able this year to meet for their accustomed Annual Conference, which has memories of notable

week-end meetings in Talbot House, Poperinghe, where the car-loads of men from Brussels and Charleroi and Paris—more than once joined by German members—used to assemble once a year. This year they met on August 23-24 at Northwood, outside London. Tea with Blackman (Charleroi) was followed by a service held by the courtesy of the Rev. J. C. Downward, M.A., at Emmanuel Church, Northwood, with a representative handful of chaps, led by Dallas Ralph, representing H.Q., Mrs. Pimblott (Brussels L.W.H.), Blackman, Brooke-Booth, Goodwin and Hall (Charleroi), Haggis, Dean, Pimblott and Morton (Brussels), and Keelam and Reason (Paris). Enjoyable meetings were held in Pimblott's house on Saturday evening and Sunday morning.

Anyone who wants to get in touch with the survivors should write to H. W. Haggis, 7, Christchurch Place, Epsom, Surrey.

AN ENGLISHWOMAN IN ERITREA

The Hon. Administrator has recently received three long and most interesting letters from his eldest daughter, who, as Miss Yvonne Lake, was well-known to Toc H in Buenos Aires. She is now married to an officer in the Indian Army, at present serving in the Middle East. These letters, from which we are allowed to quote, give a vivid picture of the conditions under which our troops live and fight, and of her journey, on duty, to join her husband. She is one of the very few Englishwomen to be allowed as yet into Eritrea.



The Italian Government House at Asmara, Eritrea, now used by the British.

Up the Nile

Nile Steamer 'Sudan,' Friday, June 13: "Just look where I am now! . . . I am travelling with a friend, and we left Cairo on Wednesday night. The journey to Assuan was very hot and dusty. At Assuan we changed to the Nile Steamer and have been chugging along ever since. It is terribly hot, and we see the temperature at Khartoum is 120 degrees! Everything is hot; the sheets on one's bunk almost burn when one lies down, the walls are hot, the chairs—everything, in fact. It is the hottest time I have ever felt in my life; the fans just fan hot air at you, which doesn't help much. The drinks are hot, too. They arrive iced, but it doesn't last very long. . ." She goes on to describe the scene—"the Nile hazy and yellow and the sky a whitish blue," the palms at the water's edge, with bare yellow hillocks behind; and the company on board—"a number of wives all hoping to see husbands, also some 'free French' (one "a little too 'free,' " for she had to go to the rescue of her friend in the next cabin, into which he walked in the dead of night!). The villages and their inhabitants, the Assuan dam, Luxor, the submerged Temple of Philae, the 'Valley of the Kings'—"gaunt, with deep, hot gorges cutting up the hills," are

described in lively sentences and illustrated with a rapid drawing or two. She ends this letter: "I went to a lovely moonlight picnic to the Pyramids the night before I left with Alan Cowling, the Consul and his wife, and about 16 other Toc H'ers. It was a great success."

Heat—and the Sudan

Grand Hotel, Khartoum, Sudan, June 16: "Half way down the Nile we had to change to a smaller boat, as the water was so low. Eventually we arrived at Wadi Halfa, and had to wait nine hours on a siding in the train in the blazing sun (9 a.m.-6 p.m.) with the temperature at 125 degrees in the shade! Can you possibly imagine how hot the train got like that, hour after hour in the blazing sun? It was absolutely terrible, and noses began to bleed and we felt we were being cooked alive, but it was worse out on the line. The train was waiting for some transport which was very late. . . The R.T.O.'s were very good to us and did all they could. One had died of heat-stroke a few days previously, and two went off their heads. Really, I think our men are absolutely wonderful—the climates they put up with for months on end and remain so cheerful and good-tempered. There was one little Lancashire lad somewhere we passed, and, after 11

months of the most gruelling heat, his morale was just about as high as possible. I do admire them so . . ." Eventually, after another day and night in the hot train, they reached Khartoum, twelve hours late.

Across Abyssinia

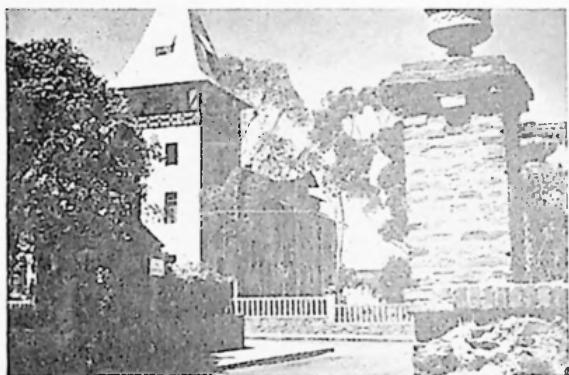
Advanced Headquarters, Sudan and Eritrea, July 4: She begins this letter by describing how she left Khartoum, after a terrific rainstorm—"it was all we could do to get to the station, as trees and branches had been blown down all over the road." "I was the only woman on the whole train," she says, "and had a compartment to myself: incidentally, I am the second wife to get up here!"

Then follow two pages of excellent description of the country and people on the journey, the 'fuzzy-wuzzies,' the men standing on one leg like storks, the warriors with leopard skins and spears, the "nice little family" on the march, with the mother carrying one baby slung fore and another ast astride her hips. A rough sketch map shows the route from Khartoum to Kassala, 250 miles as the crow flies but a long detour by railway. "What with one thing and another, it took me two days and three nights. It is a funny little narrow-gauge railway, which the slightest thing will upset. The run across the desert can only be done in very dry weather, because there is no road—you just go straight across, but it is dangerous and lots of people have got lost. . . . We had an awful lot of rain, and the second night there was a 'washout' and the train couldn't proceed. We sat there, miles from anywhere, until the middle of the next day before the breach was mended and we were able to proceed on our journey. . . . Eventually, in the early hours of the morning, we reached the terminus, just inside Eritrea—Tessenei." There she was met by an officer and taken to a camp. "They kept on saying how grand it was to see an English woman after months and months in the back of beyond, with nothing but soldiers and 'fuzzy-wuzzies' about!"

"After that little respite we set off by car and drove the whole day—another 250 miles. We stopped for lunch, half-way up, at Agordat (about which you will have read when the operations were on). There I was very kindly received by the Area Commander and given an extremely good lunch in their mess. Immediately afterwards I set off again with a new escort, as the other had to return to Tessenei. . . . There were very obvious signs of the beginning of the great battle—houses in ruins, all spattered with shrapnel, 'Ity' tanks and planes, etc. . . . We drove for about two hours, getting gradually higher and higher, till we reached the Keren hills and drove all through the place where the battle was fought. I can't begin to describe it. Suffice it to say that, having seen the steep mountain sides up which our men had to climb, in face of direct fire from above, I just can't imagine how they can have been so brave—it is absolutely incredible. The whole place filled me with gloom and depression. To begin with, the hills are rather unfriendly sort of hills, bleak and with evidence all round of the great battle. They have cleared the place up wonderfully already, but the ground is covered with shells and

bits of iron and the trees all shot about and barked with machine-gun fire, and there are still some vehicles and planes about the place. Actually they are still finding people, even now.

"If you ever saw the film on the news-reel, you will remember one hill, where the Itys had dug themselves in, which we shelled and it was a blaze of fire. Actually, there is not a blade of living grass on the hill now; I've never seen such a mess. We passed through the famous 'road block' and lots of others too, which, of course, are all repaired now. . . . There is just the one road leading up through the hills, and you see all the famous hills—Brig's Peak, Cameron's Ridge, Sachel rising up to the left as you come up the face of the hills. The wonderful thing was that there was just this long line of hills, with no gaps, so it had to be a frontal attack. The only way through was over a little shoulder where the road went (they blew it up) and the Itys were high



Italian villas at Asmara

up on either side of this, shelling it to blazes. The Sappers and Miners calmly cleared it all away, while all the time they were being plastered from above. It has to be seen to be appreciated."

Asmara at Last

She found her husband waiting at the hotel at Asmara, to her great joy. After a night's rest she went to the office to start her job—"I have been working every day since." "The food," she writes, "is extremely good—all Army rations, as the population, literally starving when 'we' arrived, has to be fed and there is not much to be had here."

She thus describes Asmara: "It is a delightful little spot, 7,800 ft. high, with lots of eucalyptus trees growing everywhere. It is well built and modern, and just like any other Italian town. The natives have their own little town, some way away, so when you walk down the 'Viale Mussolini' you see nothing but Italians everywhere, all carrying on in the most normal manner. They seem quite happy and are behaving quietly and nicely towards us. . . ."

"I have my eye open for Toc H, but for the moment it is difficult to know whether it would be worth while."

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